CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A System for searching, finding and contacting dates on the Internet in instant messaging networks, comprised of at least the following elements:
   a. A Client program, located on the User's computer;
   b. At least one Server, located on the Internet;
   c. At least one module for filling and making changes to a computer dating compatibility questionnaire;
   d. A search module for finding potential dates which can check also if they are currently Online;
   e. At least one of: An ability to search also for dates who are not currently Online, and The ability to search for dates based on reciprocal compatibility;
   f. An instant messaging element which keeps sending to a server on the Internet at short intervals short messages, so that the system may know at all times if the user is still On-line, and also enables instant exchange of messages between users.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of: the module for filling and making changes to the questionnaire, the search module, and the instant-messaging element – is an appropriate set of add-ons with at least one add-on in each set, which can be coupled to at least one of the client programs of the main instant messaging networks where add-ons are possible.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the module for filling and making changes to the questionnaire, the search module, and the instant messaging element are part of a custom-made instant messaging client.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least locally on the user's computer and is sent to a dynamic database which contains users' data only as long as they are Online, and the system enables the user to make searches for potential dates currently Online by 2-way compatibility at least as one of the choices, and the search result is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria who are currently Online, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list, so that the user can be notified immediately when they are Online.

5. The system of claim 4 where at least the user's name, e-mail, and unique ID are saved also in a static DB on the server.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least in a static database on a server on the Internet and each user's record is marked as Online as long as the user is Online, and the system enables the user to make searches for people currently Online by 2-way compatibility at least as one of

the choices, and the search results is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria who are currently Online, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list so that the user can be notified immediately when they are Online.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least in a static database on a server on the Internet and each users' record is marked as Online as long as the user is Online, and the user is allowed also to make also searches for people not currently logged-in, in which the search result is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list and can be notified immediately when they are Online.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved both in a static database on a server in the Internet and on the user's computer, and the user's and the software have a choice of searching from a group consisting of: the static database as in the system of claim 6, the static database as in the system of claim 7, and a dynamic database as in the system of claim 4.

9. A method for searching, finding and contacting dates on the Internet in instant messaging networks, comprised of at least the following steps:
    a. Providing a Client program, located on the User's computer;
    b. Providing at least one Server, located on the Internet;
    c. Providing at least one module for filling and making changes to a computer dating compatibility questionnaire;
    d. Providing a search module for finding potential dates which can check also if they are currently Online;
    e. Providing at least one of: An ability to search also for dates who are not currently Online, and The ability to search for dates based on reciprocal compatibility;
    f. Providing an instant messaging element which keeps sending to a server on the Internet at short intervals short messages, so that the system may know at all times if the user is still On-line, and also enables instant exchange of messages between users.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein at least one of: the module for filling and making changes to the questionnaire, the search module, and the instant-messaging element – is an appropriate set of add-ons with at least one add-on in each set, which can be coupled to at least one of the client programs of the main instant messaging networks where add-ons are possible.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the module for filling and making changes to the questionnaire, the search module, and the instant messaging element are part of a custom-made instant messaging client.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least locally on the user's computer and is sent to a dynamic database which

contains users' data only as long as they are Online, and the system enables the user to make searches for potential dates currently Online by 2-way compatibility at least as one of the choices, and the search result is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria who are currently Online, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list, so that the user can be notified immediately when they are Online.

13. The method of claim 12 where at least the user's name, e-mail, and unique ID are saved also in a static DB on the server.

14. The method of claim 9 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least in a static database on a server on the Internet and each user's record is marked as Online as long as the user is Online, and the system enables the user to make searches for people currently Online by 2-way compatibility at least as one of the choices, and the search results is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria who are currently Online, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list so that the user can be notified immediately when they are Online.

15. The method of claim 9 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved at least in a static database on a server on the Internet and each users' record is marked as Online as long as the user is Online, and the user is allowed also to make also searches for people not currently logged-in, in which the search result is a list of people fitting the requested search criteria, and the user can add any of them to his/her contactee list and can be notified immediately when they are Online.

16. The method of claim 9 wherein the filled questionnaire data is saved both in a static database on a server in the Internet and on the user's computer, and the user's and the software have a choice of searching from a group consisting of: the static database as in the method of claim 14, the static database as in the method of claim 15, and a dynamic database as in the method of claim 12.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein at least one of the following elements is added to the contactee list as part of the display near each contactee: Sex, Age, Area, compatibility scores, Last Date of Activity, Most frequent activity hours, Last Communication date with the user, No. of communications so far with the user, and Dating availability Status.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein the contactee list can be sorted by any of the elements listed in claim 17, and the sorting order is based on at least one of these elements.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein the user can have at least one of the following additional abilities: Knowing how many other users have him/her in their contactee lists, Knowing at least the e-mails of these users, and being able to broadcast messages to them.

20. The system of claim 1 wherein whenever a user changes his/her Dating availability Status it is automatically updated in all the contactee lists wherein that user is listed.

21. An Online computer dating system wherein for users that gave also an IM id number, the system tries to find out if they are currently Online through an element that contacts the relevant server, and if so, when showing a potential date's data on a dating search results list, the system shows also his/her IM id number, the IM network that it belongs to, and an indication if he/she is Online, so that the user can contact him/her through the appropriate IM client program.

22. An Online computer dating system wherein being Online can be defined as at least one of: a. A user has logged into the system with his/her user name and password not longer than a certain time ago, b. A user has performed at least 1 activity in the system not longer than a certain time ago.

23. The system of any of claims 1-8,17-22.

24. The system of claim 23 wherein the user can choose in each search at least one of the following search options: a. Reciprocal compatibility Search based on the self descriptions and preferences and importances in the questionnaires of both the user and the potential dates; b. 1-way compatibility search based at least on the data of preferences and importances of the user's questionnaire; and c. attribute search, based on marking just for the search a small number of attributes that are used as necessary conditions and using at list these conditions.

25. The system of claim 23 wherein when the user is searching in any of the non-reciprocal search options, his/her own self description data is also taken into account at least partially.

26. The systems of claim 23 wherein the user can request and get a list of date-search results that show the most compatible potential dates in descending order of compatibility, and near each potential date is marked if he/she is currently Online, and, if not, when was the last time and date he/she was Online.

27. The system of claim 23 wherein in a list of dates with descending order of compatibility, potential dates that are Online are marked by at least one of the group: [Special color, Special shape of text, Special size of text, and Special icon], and potential dates that are not currently online but were recently Online are marked less conspicuously, and potential dates that are not currently Online and also were not recently online are marked even less conspicuously.

28. The systems of claim 1 wherein the user can request and get a list of date-search results that is divided at least into the following sub-lists and within each sub-list the dates are ordered by descending compatibility scores: A sub-list of currently Online dates, a sub-list of dates that are not currently Online but were recently Online, and a sub-list of dates that are not currently Online and also were not recently Online.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein if the potential date is not currently Online, the last time and date he/she was online is listed near his/her details.

30. The system of claim 23 wherein if the user is accessing the server from a Client program on another computer, he/she can still access at least his/her questionnaire data and contactee list from a copy kept on the server, by supplying appropriate password/identification.

31. The system of claim 23 wherein after a user hasn't been Online for a certain time period, the system can generate an automatic message to him/her to ask if he/she is still interested, and if an appropriate reply does not come back after a certain additional time and after at least 1 attempt, the system automatically "freezes" that user until he/she shows activity again.

32. The system of claim 23 wherein after a user hasn't been active in the system for a certain time period, the system can generate an automatic message to him/her to ask if he/she is still interested, and if an appropriate reply does not come back after a certain additional time and after at least 1 attempt, the system automatically "freezes" that user until he/she shows activity again.

33. The system of claim 23 wherein if a user submits a form reporting that some other user is no longer interested in dating, the system can generate an automatic message to the user in question and ask if he/she is still interested, and if an appropriate reply does not come back after a certain additional time and after at least 1 attempt, the system automatically "freezes" that user until he/she shows activity again.

34. The system of claim 33 wherein the system disregards said report if the user in question has been recently Online.

35. The system claim 33 wherein the system disregards said report if the user in question has recently performed a dating-search.

36. The system of claim 33 wherein everyone has to include also his/her phone number so that they can be contacted by phone.

37. The system of claim 36 wherein if the user does not want his/her phone number exposed to other users without control, he/she can mark his/her phone as "protected", which means that other users access his/her phone only through

the system without knowing the real number, until the user decides to give them the actual number.

38. The system of claim 37 wherein "protected phones" can be accessed only at reasonable times that can be defined by the system and by the user.

39. The system of claim 37 wherein each "protected phone" can be accessed by each user only a limited number of times.

40. The system of claim 23 wherein in questions of the dating questionnaire where there is a mismatch between the self-description and the preference of the person being matched against, the system can take into account also the size of the gap/distance.

41. The system of claim 23 wherein in questions of the dating questionnaire where there is a mismatch between the self-description and the preference of the person being matched against, the system can take into account also the direction of the gap/distance.

42. The system of claim 23 wherein matching by area takes into account in addition to the self-areas and desired areas marked by the users, also the difference in zip-codes in order to further refine the scores.

43. The system of claim 23 wherein matching by area takes into account in addition to the self-areas and desired areas marked by the users, also the similarity in the first digits of the phone numbers, if both phone numbers being compared are not mobile numbers, in order to further refine the scores.

44. The system of claim 23 wherein matching by area takes into account at least the distance in absolute Geographical coordinates.

45. The system of claim 44 wherein these coordinates are GPS data.

46. The system of claim 23 wherein users can be notified automatically as soon as someone new fitting a certain criterion sends his/her data to the system.

47. The system of claim 23 wherein users can be notified automatically as soon as someone new fitting a certain criterion has sent his/her data to the system and is currently Online.

48. The system of claim 46 wherein the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate e-mail message to the user.

49. The system of claim 46 wherein the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate instant message to the user if applicable.

50. The system of claim 46 wherein the dating is in an IM network and the users can request that at least for some of the cases the notification will be by adding the new dates directly into their contactee lists.

51. The system of claim 46 wherein the notification is at least by an automatic phone call to the user.

52. The system of claim 46 wherein if the user has a cellular phone the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate SMS message to the user.

53. The system of claim 23 wherein users connected through cellular devices can be notified automatically as soon as someone fitting a certain criterion is close to them beyond a certain distance.

54. The system of claim 53 wherein this distance is known through the cell system.

55. The system of claim 53 wherein this distance is known through short-range wireless communication between the cellular devices themselves.

56. The system of claim 53 wherein this distance is known through geographical coordinates.

57. The systems of claim 23 wherein the user can request and get at least as one of the search options a list of date-search results that is divided at least into the following sub-lists and within each sub-list the dates are ordered by descending compatibility scores: A sub-list of dates that are in an area close to him/her, and a sub-list of dates that are in an area less close to him/her.

58. The system of claim 57 wherein among users that have cellular devices, at least one of the search options is to put dates that are in range of short range wireless communication with the user in a higher list than other dates.

59. The system of claim 57 wherein among users that have cellular devices, at least one of the search option is to put dates that are close to the user according any of [the info from the cells and geographical coordinates] in a higher list than dates that are not that close.

60. The systems of claim 23 wherein the user can request and get at least as one of the search options a list of date-search results in descending order of compatibility, in which dates that are closer to the user are marked more conspicuously.

61. The system of claim 23 wherein a systematic data pool of pictures of males and of females is used so that each user can mark at least 1 picture that it most similar to himself/herself.

62. The system of claim 61 wherein the pictures are divided at least into facial pictures and body pictures and are marked separately for each category.

63. The system of claim 61 wherein the user can also mark the pictures of the opposite sex that he/she most likes.

64. The system of claims 61 wherein the pictures are photographs.

65. The system of claim 61 wherein the pictures are systematically drawn images.

66. The system of claim 61 wherein at least one of the info from marking the pictures and info from textual questions on appearance is taken into account while calculating the appearance compatibility.

67. The system of claim 61 wherein the info from the textual questions on appearance is taken into account while asking the user to mark his/her own appearance and the appearance of the desired dates, in order to increase efficiency and save time.

68. The system of claim 61 wherein the user is asked to make choices in a tree-like manner in order to increase efficiency and save time.

69. The system of claim 23 wherein the client program is able to work automatically with more than one IM network

70. The system of claim 23 wherein at least the IM client program is an integral part of the browser.

71. The system of claim 23 wherein at least the elements in the client program that deal with dating are an integral part of the browser.

72. The system of claim 23 wherein users that are connected through cellular devices can initiate a request to check if there are any available dates within range of short distance wireless communication.

73. The system of claim 72 wherein if the person is available and a member in the system, the user can also view at least some background data about him/her.

74. The system of claim 72 wherein if the person is available and a member in the system, the user can also view at least the appearance data about him/her in order to be able to know if it refers to the person he/she is looking at.

75. The system of claim 72 wherein the user can include screening criteria in advance so that only nearby phones who's users fit the criteria respond to the query.

76. An Online computer dating system wherein the system uses at least one of the following methods to try to automatically catch suspect duplicate records: [a. Check if the e-mail starts with at least a very similar name on the left side of the "@"; b. Check if the user name is at least very similar. C. Check if the birth date is at least very similar;] and if so, preferably the system checks if other data are also very similar, and then automatically decides if the data is similar enough to decide that it is the same person, and if it is, then the system automatically uses the new data as an update of the older data, and If the system is less sure, then it does at least one of: [a. Ask the user if he/she is indeed the same person, b. Report in to a log for human decision, c. Warn the user that various sanctions will be taken against people who deliberately try to mislead the system].

77. In an Online dating system a method wherein users can be notified automatically as soon as someone new fitting a certain criterion sends his/her data to the system.

78. The method of claim 77 wherein the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate e-mail message to the user.

79. The method of claim 77 wherein the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate instant message to the user if applicable.

80. The method of claim 77 wherein the dating is in an IM network and the users can request that at least for some of the cases the notification will be by adding the new dates directly into their contactee lists.

81. The system of claim 77 wherein the notification is at least by an automatic phone call to the user.

82. The method of claim 77 wherein the user has a cellular phone and the notification is at least by sending immediately an appropriate SMS message to the user.

83. In an Online computer Dating service, a method wherein a systematic data pool of pictures of males and of females is used so that each user can mark at least 1 picture that it most similar to himself/herself.

84. The method of claim 83 wherein the pictures are divided at least into facial pictures and body pictures and are marked separately for each category.

85. The method of claim 83 wherein the user can also mark the pictures of the opposite sex that he/she most likes.

86. The method of claim 83 wherein the pictures are photographs.

87. The method of claim 83 wherein the pictures are systematically drawn images.

88. The system of claim 83 wherein at least one of the info from marking the pictures and info from textual questions on appearance is taken into account while calculating the appearance compatibility.

89. The method of claim 83 wherein the info from the textual questions on appearance is taken into account while asking the user to mark his/her own appearance and the appearance of the desired dates, in order to increase efficiency and save time.

90. The method of claim 83 wherein the user is asked to make choices in a tree-like manner in order to increase efficiency and save time.

91. The system of claim 23 wherein each two users of the system can also check the exact compatibility between them.

92. The system of claim 23 wherein if a user's compatibility scores are generally low beyond a certain criterion, the system can report to the user the list of questions that most contributed to the problem.

93. The system of claim 23 wherein the system allows users to send to persons who are currently online instant messages by displaying messages to the person the next time he/she tries to access pages on the system by generating a page on the fly when the system recognizes by browser cookies that this is the person for whom the message is intended.

94. The system of claim 93 wherein these instant messages can also be used as additional option for the automatic notification.

95. The system of claims 93 wherein the instant messages can also be by automatic refresh of pages.

96. The system of claim 93 wherein at least one of Javasrcipt and ActiveX is used to tell the server if the user is still active based on user activities not related to the site.

97. In an Online computer dating system, a method wherein being Online can be defined as at least one of: a. A user has logged into the system with his/her user name and password not longer than a certain time ago, b. A user has performed at least 1 activity in the system not longer than a certain time ago.

98. The method of claim 97 wherein the system allows users to send to persons who are currently online instant messages by displaying messages to the person the next time he/she tries to access page on the system by generating a

page on the fly when the system recognizes by browser cookies that this is the person for whom the message is intended.

99. The method of claim 98 wherein these instant messages can also be used as additional option for the automatic notification.

100.   The method of claim 98 wherein the instant messages can also be by automatic refresh of pages.

101.   The method of claim 97 wherein at least one of Javasrcipt and ActiveX is used to tell the server if the user is still active based on user activities not related to the site.